



Healthy Forests Report

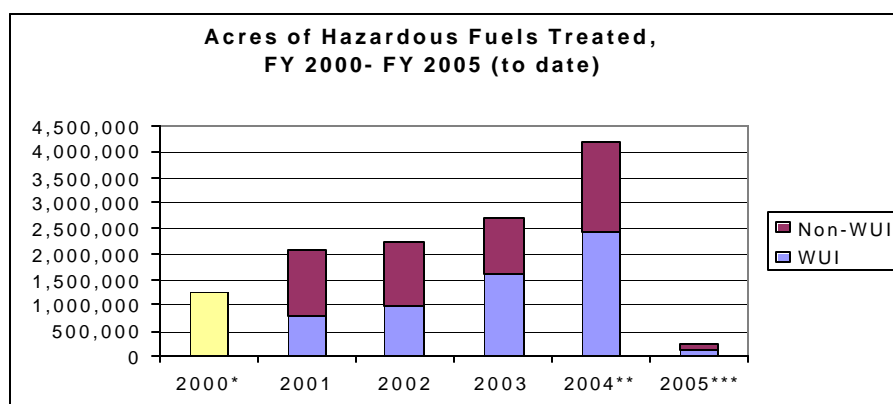
December 6, 2004

(All acres reported in this report are rounded to the nearest thousand.)

The Healthy Forests Initiative is an ongoing commitment to care for America's forests and rangelands, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to communities, help save the lives of firefighters and citizens, and protect critical natural resources. Coupled with the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the National Fire Plan, much progress has been made under the Healthy Forests Initiative to reduce the threat of wildland fires and restore the health of our public lands.

HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION: 2004 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since 2001, Federal land management agencies have treated 11 million acres of hazardous fuels on public lands. In 2004, the Federal agencies' combined target for hazardous fuels treatment and improving land condition was 3.7 million acres. The Forest Service and Department of the Interior land management agencies far exceeded this goal by treating nearly 4.2 million acres, or 113% of the 2004 goal. Of these acres, 2.4 million were in the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

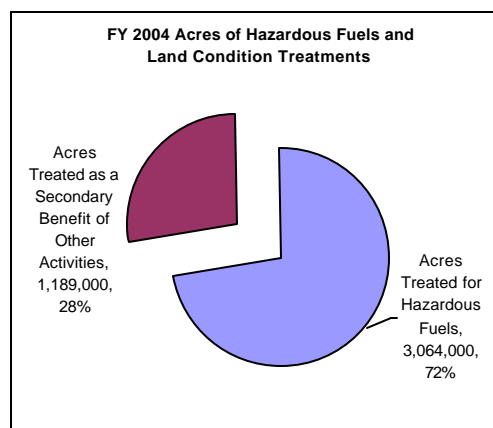


* FY 2000 data was not aggregated by WUI vs. non-WUI treatments.

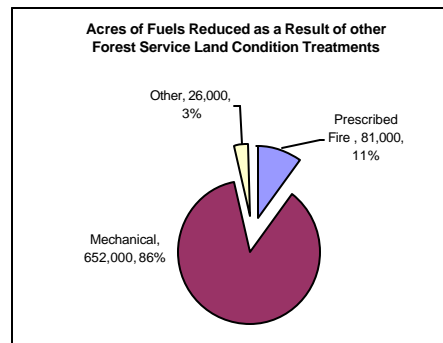
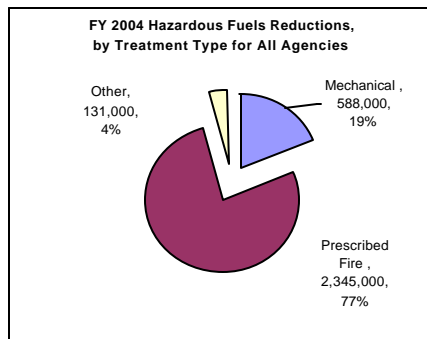
** FY 2004 acres include treatments from other land management activities.

*** FY 2005 acres treated as of 12/06/2004.

The majority of the 4 million treated acres are the result of projects that are designed to directly reduce hazardous fuel levels using mechanical means (e.g., thinning, chipping, and mechanically removing brush), prescribed fire, other types of non-fire activities (e.g., grazing), or some combination of the three. However, many other land management activities, such as wildlife habitat improvement projects, timber sales, and silvicultural treatments reduce hazardous fuel levels as a secondary benefit.



The following illustrations show treatment types used for the hazardous fuels program and other vegetative treatments that have a secondary benefit of improving the fire condition class.



Hazardous Fuels and Land Condition Treatments, FY 2004

	Acres treated under Hazardous Fuels		Acres Treated w/ a Secondary Benefit	Total FY 04 Acres Treated
	Prescribed Fire	Mechanical and Other		
FS	1,518,000	285,000	758,000	2,561,000
DOI	827,000	434,000	370,000	1,631,000
Total	2,345,000	719,000	1,128,000	4,192,000

In addition to the treatments above, land managers may choose to allow fires that started naturally (usually from a lightning strike) to burn to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined areas. This management technique is known as Wildland Fire Use (WFU). WFU produces many of the benefits of prescribed fire and mechanical thinning by reducing hazardous fuel levels and thinning understory vegetation and brush. As reported by the National Interagency Fire Center, the Forest Service and Department of the Interior managed fires for WFU on 120,000 acres in 2004 (these acres are not included in above table; 2004 figures for WFU in Alaska are not yet available).

HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION: 2005 EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Hazardous fuels treatments for FY 2005 are well under way. In the first two months of FY 2005, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior land management bureaus treated over 230,000 acres of hazardous fuels, more than half of which were at the wildland urban interface.

UTILIZATION OF FOREST BYPRODUCTS

In FY 2004, 35 percent (328,000 acres) of the Forest Service's 934,000 mechanically treated acres have produced byproducts for utilization. To date in FY 2005, over 2,000 acres have produced byproducts. These byproducts were used in a number of products, such as timber, engineered lumber, paper and pulp, furniture and other value-added commodities, and bio-energy and bio-based products such as plastics, ethanol, and diesel. The Forest Service's 2008 Strategic Goal is to obtain byproduct utilization on 40 percent of all mechanically treated acres.

HEALTHY FORESTS AUTHORITIES

The below table details the current and planned use of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) authority and the Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI) administrative tools (e.g., categorical exclusion for hazardous fuels). Public land managers are forming coalitions with state and local stakeholders to use new and existing tools and authorities to protect communities and critical natural resources. These coalitions are working together to identify critical projects and the most appropriate authorities and funding sources. A record 4 million acres of public lands were improved this year.

Healthy Forests Authorities

	FY 2004		FY 2005	
	Projects	Acres	Projects	Acres
HFRA Authority (EA and EIS)	60	228,000	107	439,000
HFI Administrative Tools	564	442,000	642	351,238

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS

	Bureau of Land Management		Forest Service	
2003	2 contracts	300 acres	50 contracts	14,000 acres
2004**	34 contracts	26,000 acres	59 contracts	40,000 acres
Total	145 contracts for 80,000 acres*			

*The 2004 figures are estimated.

**Not all projects in table above were authorized under HFRA.

HFRA TITLE IV: INSECT INFESTATIONS AND RELATED DISEASES

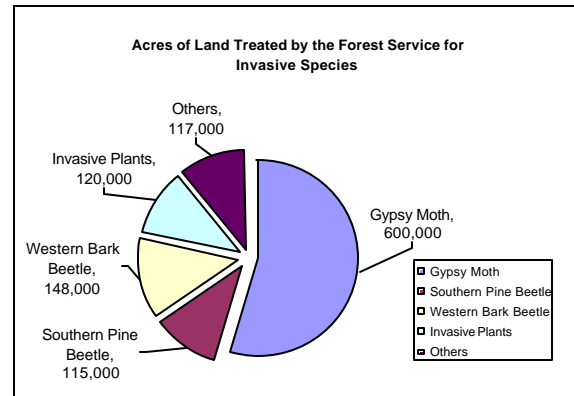
Using authority provided under Title IV of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, the Forest Service currently has six landscape-scale research projects planned on nearly 3,000 acres. The purpose of projects is to conduct landscape-scale applied research to address the following insect infestations and diseases:

- ❖ Gypsy moth on the George Washington Jefferson, Monongahela, and Wayne National Forests,
- ❖ Hemlock wooly adelgid in North Carolina,
- ❖ Red-oak borer in the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains in Arkansas,
- ❖ Gypsy moth and oak decline in the Daniel Boone National Forest,
- ❖ Southern pine beetle in southern pine stands west of the Mississippi River, and
- ❖ Hemlock wooly adelgid on the Allegheny National Forest.

Also under Title IV of HFRA, the Forest Service is conducting 7 accelerated information gathering efforts on diseases and pests that pose significant threats to our nations' forests and grasslands. One of these efforts is developing and testing trapping systems for exotic beetles and wood-boring insects that could cause extensive damage.

INVASIVE SPECIES AND FOREST HEALTH

The *National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Invasive Species Management* (http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/publications/Invasive_Species.pdf) was released in late fall 2004. The publication identifies strategic direction for all Forest Service Programs. In FY 2004, Forest Service Forest Health Protection (FHP) projects and programs included both prevention efforts and the restoration of lands impacted by native and nonnative invasive species. For example, the southern pine beetle (SPB) poses significant threats to forests in the Southern United States. The Forest Service FHP program provided \$10 million to implement a SPB initiative that includes prevention and restoration activities on 115,000 acres of Federal, state and private lands. In the Western United States, a complex of western bark beetles (WBB) has caused outbreaks in many States. The Forest Service FHP program provided \$20 million to implement a WBB initiative to treat 148,000 acres. Other funds have been allocated to control and manage invasive pests, including hemlock woolly adelgid, white pine blister rust, gypsy moth, and invasive plants. A total of 1.1 million acres will be treated as a result of these efforts.



HEALTHY FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES

Under the Healthy Forests Initiative, communities in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are prioritized for fuel reduction activities. Since 2001, more than 5.6 million acres of hazardous fuels have been treated in the WUI, amounting to almost half of the overall treated acreage. The Federal land management agencies are also working with coalitions of interested citizens to identify those areas in greatest need of hazardous fuel treatments. An important component of this collaboration is our efforts in working closely with communities to complete Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). In October, we reported that there were over 250 CWPPs completed or in progress across 11 states. Recent efforts to identify additional CWPPs from all 50 states indicated that this number is in fact much higher. To date, the National Association of State Foresters has identified over 600 CWPPs across the nation; it is anticipated that this number will continue to grow as partnerships are formed and high-risk areas identified.

Highlighted Community Wildfire Protection Plan Success Story:

Lolo National Forest, Montana: On the Lolo National Forest in Montana, residents, local rural fire districts, private industry, and state and federal land managers have developed the Seeley Lake Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The plan was completed in March of 2004. The plan outlines goals to treat 900 acres per year of private lands identified as high hazard over a ten-year period. A hazardous fuels task force was established upon completion of the plan. The task force identified priority hazard fuels treatment areas and strategic fuel break areas around the community. Twenty-eight landowners were identified as owning property in these priority areas. Recently, the task force used the plan to secure an additional \$127,300 for projects through the summer of 2005.